

Mailed to:

Office of the Special Assistant for Mental Retardation
The White House
Washington, D. C.

July 7, 1964

Dr. Stafford L. Warren
University of California, Los Angeles
School of Medicine
Los Angeles 24, California

Dear Dr. Warren:

Your recent proposals for a monolithic answer to the crushing problems of scientific communication are of great interest, and especially in that they seem to have moved one notch farther than previous efforts.

When I first started working on Weinberg's panel, I found I was perhaps the most zealous firebrand on it for a similar approach (see enclosure). Since then I have had some second thoughts, especially since Congress started taking such a critical view of science and more so in light of NIH's reactions to this. Frankly, I am afraid to leave the essential communication channels where they might be exposed to the pettier side of politics and bureaucracy. The question who will control access to and use of the information system cannot be set aside as a triviality in the face of current experience.

Unfortunately the scientific societies are not taking the necessary initiative, and when they do they tend to delegate these responsibilities to an equally stuffy bureaucracy, like the ACS publications and Biological Abstracts, but this system at least has the virtue that local mistakes do not become the final ones.

Probably the critical problem is too important to be left in this muddle, and we should have a central repository. But this must be coupled with maximum encouragement of peripheral discretion, especially from the societies (contra the private journals), in the selection of the very small part of the whole torrent that should be broadcast rather than stored for easy retrieval on request.

On the technical side, I hope very much that you might look closely at Citation Indexing, which has much subtle power beyond the obvious, and might well be the central theme of a comprehensive retrieval system. To this end I could do little better than introduce Dr. Garfield to you; I am sure you would find his analysis a very cogent one and I know he is most interested to discuss information retrieval with you. I am suggesting he write you in a few days to ask if it would be convenient for you to see him.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

Enclosures: SCITEL proposal
Citation Index brochure
cc: Dr. Eugene Garfield

STAFFORD L. WARREN